



# The Deliverance of the Holy Land.

## A SERMON

Preached at the Service of Thanksgiving held by  
the United Religious and Military Orders of the  
Temple and of St. John of Jerusalem, Palestine,  
Rhodes and Malta at the Temple Church, on  
Thursday, 12th December, 1918,

BY

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"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband."—REV. XXI. 1, 2.

**T**O-DAY our service is both joyful and solemn. We rejoice because the war has ended. The long-drawn agony has ceased. After years of tense anxiety, success, definite and final, has crowned our efforts; and, as one consequence, the Holy Land will never again be devastated by the misrule of the Turk. But solemnity mingles with our joy because we remember our grievous losses. We cannot and would not forget how many gallant men have given their lives for the country which they held dear, and moreover on us who survive rests the duty of ensuring that their sacrifices are used to make a better world. It is most fitting that you, members of the United Religious and Military Orders of the Temple and of St. John, should meet for this service in the Temple Church. Your name shows that you seek to retain and foster the great ideals which animated the Knights Templars and the Knights of the Hospital before corruption and decay brought ruin or stagnation. You are not unmindful that the Knights Templars dedicated their lives "to forsake worldly chivalry of which human favour and not Jesus Christ was the cause," and "to fight with a pure mind for the supreme and true King." You naturally come for your service of thanksgiving to the Church which the Knights of the Temple built nearly seven and a half centuries ago: to the Church where, for more than two centuries after the dissolution of the rival order, the Knights of St. John gave thanks and praise to God.

And, I am sure, as you come you wish to gather together the great memories of the past and to use them for inspiration and guidance in the present. It is good at times to turn wistfully to the past. It helps us to see more clearly the interplay of the forces of good and evil by which we are often confused in daily life. We become aware of the persistency

and power of the great motives which, under God's providence, ever draw men onward and upward towards the Kingdom of Heaven. The drab present reveals a grandeur too often forgotten as we understand that saints and heroes of distant days have been followed by men in our own time not unworthy to be called their children. We gain much if we test our motives and purify our ambitions by recalling the splendour of our spiritual heritage. We are less likely to be untrue to the best that is in us if we remember how the mistakes and sins of men not unlike ourselves shattered fine hopes such as we also share.

And so in this Church, rich with centuries of worship, hallowed by many a noble aspiration, you worship and meditate to-day. The effigies of the knights which have lain here for some seven hundred years become a symbol of undying Christian spiritual forces. The knights wished to redeem the land where Jesus of Nazareth was born and died and rose again. To us it has been given to succeed in the task on which they set their hearts. But their desire was only part of a larger hope. They thought that, as pilgrims freely passed to visit the places made sacred by the Saviour's earthly life, they would be drawn more closely to their Lord. They hoped that by success in the task to which they devoted their lives they would hasten the time when Christ would rule in the hearts of men. And we to-day must not forget that beyond our immediate success lies its spiritual promise.

Of the military triumph we are proud. We confidently hope that Galilee, where our Saviour lived as a boy and where He spent the happiest days of His ministry, will become once again the rich and fragrant land that He knew. We recall what Renan said in his "Life of Jesus" half a century ago:—  
 "This glorious country which to-day, by reason of the gross squalor which Turkish Mahomedanism has brought to human life, has become so gloomy, so heart-breaking, in the time of Jesus abounded in well-being and gaiety." We trust, that under international protection, the Holy Land will escape from the shameful neglect and squalid misgovernment of the past;

that the hills on which Christ gazed as He meditated and taught may once again look down on prosperous villages, shady woods and smiling fields. We hope that once again the sower will go forth to sow in safety; that the valleys will stand thick with corn as when He walked through the cornfields and His disciples plucked and rubbed the ears of corn; that on the hillsides the sheep will graze as when he said "I am the Good Shepherd, and I know Mine own and Mine own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."

But even deeper thoughts stir our hearts. You are significantly by your title religious no less than military orders, and the religious promise of our victory we dare not ignore. The Holy Land is for ever sacred because Jesus there preached His divine message, told men of the love and mercy of our Father in Heaven, and called them to be His disciples. It is difficult in our private lives loyally to follow Christ. We falter and compromise as the currents of the world prove stronger than our efforts to carry out the spirit of His teaching. And still harder is it for the Christian citizens of any nation so to influence their country's policy that it becomes worthy to be called a Christian land. And yet it is our duty to make the attempt. Our people will not make the best use of the victory for which to-day we give thanks to God unless they seek to establish righteousness and peace upon earth. Above all narrower aims our faith bids us heal by generous justice the scars of war and make the reconciliation of embittered peoples our chiefest aim.

Do you doubt it? I think not, for you are an international order. In other countries, and in the American Commonwealth especially, allied preceptories or, as they are there styled commanderies are numerous. Yet it is well to reflect why Jerusalem is for Christendom sacred above every city of the world. Always as men think of the Holy Land their thoughts pass to the Holy City and the Cross, and so to Golgotha's bare hill where the Son of Man was lifted up that He might draw all men unto Him; where He, at Whose

coming the angels sang "Peace on earth, goodwill to men," gave His life a ransom for many. Jerusalem for us is the place where Christ died that by the redemptive power of His innocent suffering His kingdom might be established upon earth, and that all men by the might of His love might be reconciled to one another and to God. In Jerusalem Christ died. Moreover in Jerusalem, as we believe, He rose again to show that perfect holiness and perfect love are stronger than death itself. We mourn to-day the loss of many slain in the glory of their youth. Let us remember that all that was good in them is immortal, that the reward of honest struggle, true sacrifice and spiritual victory is eternal joy in the presence of God. Such is the message of the Resurrection. And, because that message came from Jerusalem on the first Easter Day, the city beyond any other place on earth hold memories which fortify our hopes of Eternal Life.

As we think of what Christ meant—and still means—to the world, of the power of His teaching to make all things new, the earthly city, so often profaned, becomes but a symbol. Our thoughts pass beyond material well-being and military success, beyond the fleeting glories of the proud moments of life, to visions splendid of love triumphant on earth when Christ shall be all in all, and to thoughts of the new Jerusalem, the centre of the Kingdom of Heaven in the world to come, the pure city of light and peace. Because the seer of the Apocalypse had such hopes and visions, he wrote the words of my text:—

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband."